

**Air Quality Conformity Task Force
Summary Meeting Notes
October 27, 2011**

Attendance:

Mike Brady – Caltrans

Ginger Vagenas – EPA

Ted Matley – FTA

Stew Sonnenberg– FHWA

Roy Molseed – VTA

Lynn McIntyre – URS

Stefanie Hom - MTC

Ashley Nguyen – MTC

Sri Srinivasan - MTC

- 1. Welcome and Self Introductions:** Stefanie Hom (MTC) called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. See attendance roster above.
- 2. PM_{2.5} Interagency Consultations:** To begin the interagency consultations for PM_{2.5} project level conformity, Stefanie Hom (MTC) asked the project sponsor to give a brief overview of the project prior to opening up the project for questions by the Task Force.

POAQC Status Determinations

Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA): SR-85 Express Lanes Project

Roy Molseed (VTA) gave an overview of the project. The project would convert existing High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on State Route (SR) 85 to High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes. The express lanes would be implemented on northbound and southbound SR-85 from US-101 in southern San Jose to US-101 in Mountain View in Santa Clara County. The project would also include the continuation of the express lanes for 3.3 miles on US-101 in southern San Jose and 4.1 miles in Mountain View, for a total of 30.8 miles. Work includes the installation of new signage, striping, vehicle detection sensor units, and dynamic message signs.

Roy indicated that the purpose of the project would be to maintain consistency with legislation to implement express lanes in the SR-85 corridor, utilize existing HOV capacity, and manage traffic congestions. The Draft EIR is expected to be released in the summer of 2012 and completed by the end of 2012.

Lynn McIntyre (URS), working with VTA on the project, indicated that on SR-85, between US-101 at the southern terminus of SR-85 and I-280 in the north, trucks over 9,000 pounds are and will continue to be prohibited. The only trucks allowed on this span are maintenance vehicles, emergency vehicles, buses, and RVs. Since the truck restriction went into effect, truck percentages have been low, ranging from 0.25 percent to 3.05 percent. The express lanes project would not provide additional capacity for trucks. Even when the project is projected out to the years 2015 and 2035, the overall number of trucks remains low on the corridor.

Lynn further explained that the 9 percent increase in truck traffic between the build scenario in 2035 and the no-build scenario is due to the fact that overall AADT is increasing, since single occupancy vehicles would now be allowed to use the express lanes. The increase in trucks is related to overall increase in vehicles as result of additional express lanes.

Lynn added that they conducted a sensitivity analysis to calculate how high truck percentages would need to be on SR-85 before they go beyond the 10,000 AADT truck threshold. In 2015,

the percentage would need to be at 7.3 percent, which would more than double the truck percentage. In 2035, truck percentages would need to be at 6.15 percent, which would more than double the existing highest truck percentage in the corridor. This project would not be able to accommodate this increase in truck traffic. Therefore, they believe that the SR-85 Express Lanes Project is not a POAQC.

Dick Fahey (Caltrans), who offered comments through email, was concerned about the increase in truck traffic, which would be as much as 9 percent between the no-build and build scenarios in 2035.

Mike Brady (Caltrans) indicated that the increase in truck traffic may have to do with how traffic numbers were derived. If the truck numbers were derived using a flat percentage applied to AADT, then it would show an increase in trucks because there would be more traffic in the HOV lane. He was not sure if traditional traffic studies are able to show if truck traffic actually increases like that.

Lynn responded that they applied a constant of 3.5 percent to derive truck AADT. They also looked at overall truck AADT in the corridor since it opened; in the years since the truck restriction went into place, the percentage of trucks has never been above 3.05 percent, which is why the 3.5 percent assumption is conservative.

Mike agreed that if VTA is applying a flat percentage to calculate AADT, the AADT assumptions are probably conservative for a HOV project because they are adding a lane that trucks are not supposed to be in.

Ginger Vagenas (EPA) indicated that the truck restriction is only for three-quarters length of the project. There is likely to be a difference in numbers outside of that area where the restrictions do not apply.

Lynn responded that they looked at that issue and do not believe there would be an increase in truck traffic since historical data has shown that truck traffic has remained low in the areas where there are no restrictions. It is not worth it for many trucks to travel on that segment of SR-85 for a short distance when they cannot exit to a major destination.

Mike indicated that it would have been helpful to know the boundaries of truck restriction. Lynn indicated that the truck restrictions do not apply on SR-85 between Fremont and El Camino.

Stew Sonnenberg (FHWA) indicated that even from the Fremont to El Camino section, truck traffic would be about 3.5 percent.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that this project is not a POAQC.

PM_{2.5} Conformity Exempt List Review

Stefanie (MTC) indicated that there were 5 projects on the exempt list. Ashley (MTC) added that two of the projects were HSIP projects, and one bicycle/pedestrian projects. Stefanie asked for questions on any of these projects.

Mike (Caltrans) indicated that if the projects listed on the exempt list were not HSIP projects, then the first four projects would not be exempt.

Final Determination: FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA, and MTC concurred that the projects on the exempt list are exempt from project level PM 2.5 conformity.

3. Consent Calendar

Stefanie (MTC) asked for questions on any items on the exempt calendar.

There were no questions on any items on the consent calendar.

Final Determination: All items on the consent calendar were approved by FHWA, Caltrans, EPA, FTA and MTC.

4. Other Business/Adjourn

Stefanie (MTC) reminded everyone to fill out the online Doodle poll sent out by Ashley (MTC) and Brenda (MTC) so they could assess the group's availability and schedule next month's meeting.

Ted Matley (FTA) suggested putting the issue of thresholds for minor transit projects on the next agenda.

Stew (FHWA) indicated that he sent out letter about the next certification review, which will occur January 10 - 12, 2012. Ashley (MTC) indicated they are starting the review process internally.

Ashley indicated that MTC is hoping to consultant with federal agencies on demographic assumptions for the RTP in January. There are a lot of changes on how demographic forecasts are prepared and they want to run the methodology and approach by the group before starting the conformity analysis.

Ginger (EPA) requested that she would like to have any materials prepared on establishing thresholds on minor transit fleet expansions as far in advance as possible. OTAC is interested in providing comments, and EPA would like as much lead time as possible with them.

Ted and Ashley indicated that they would work together on the minor transit fleet expansions threshold materials and would forward them to Ginger.

Stefanie adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:00 am.